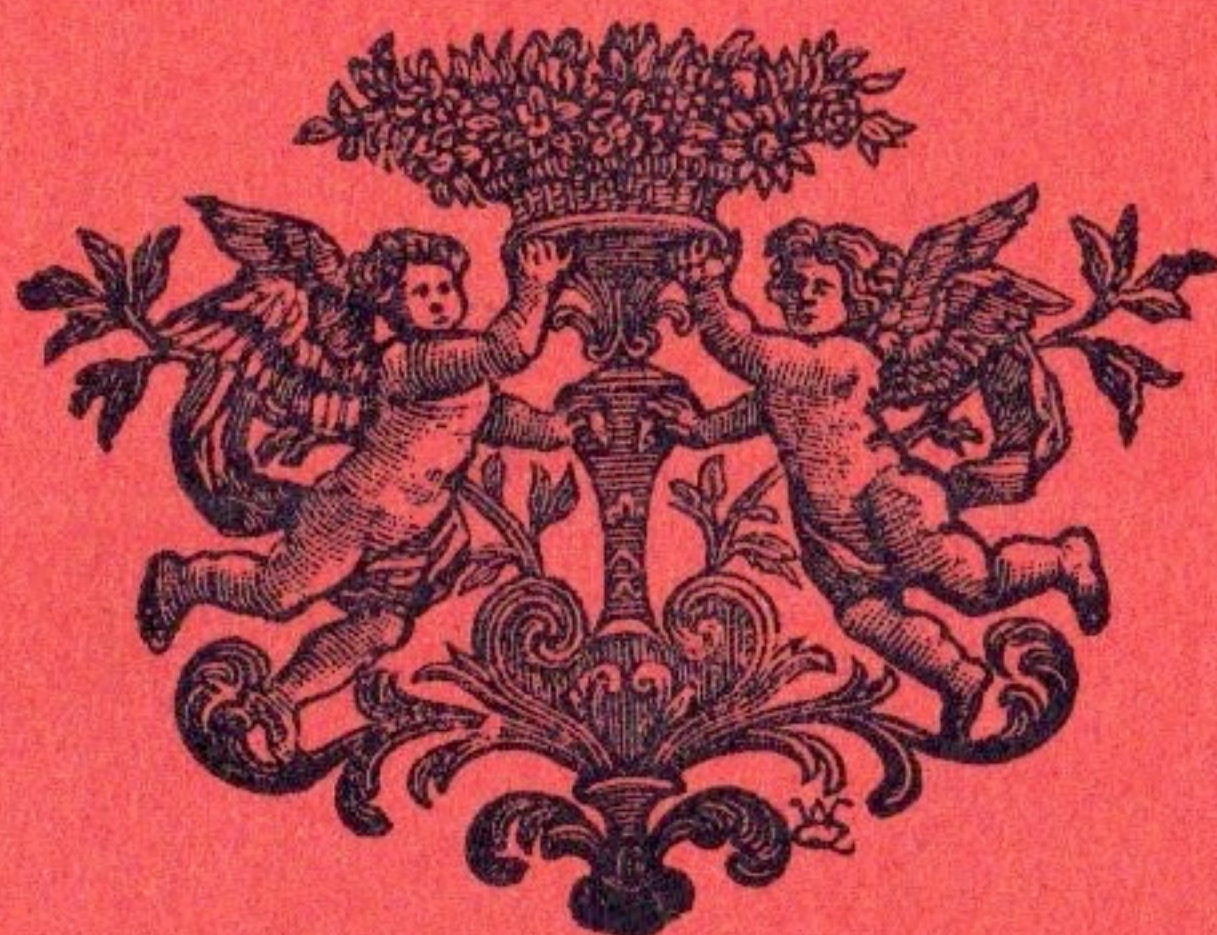


CATHOLIC CUSTOMS



R. LL. LANGFORD-JAMES, D.D.

Price Sixpence

CATHOLIC
CUSTOMS

BY THE REV. D.

R. L. LANGFORD-JAMES, D.D.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. REVERENCES	1
II. THE CANDLES	3
III. THE ASHES	5
IV. HOLY HANDS	7
V. THE HOLY KISS	9
VI. WALKING	12
VII. PROCESSIONS	14
VIII. THE INCENSE	16
IX. THE SIGN OF THE CROSS	18
X. HOLY WATER	20
XI. THE CHRISTIAN'S DEATH-BED	22
XII. THE BELLS	24

CATHOLIC CUSTOMS

I

REVERENCES

THE expression of reverence or respect towards persons and things to which they are due is the essential note of courtesy or good manners. However lax our modern manners may have become—and there are those who maintain that we have entirely lost them—yet the males among us still lift their hats to a lady and remove them on entering a house, as an act of courtesy. Similarly in the things of the Church, we are accustomed to perform little acts of reverence. Such an act is the bow to the High Altar on entering or leaving a church, the reason for which is, as most people now know, that the High Altar represents the Throne of God. The lesser altars represent the shrines of saints, or at any rate something lesser than the Divine Throne, and so one does not bow to them. Of course, if the Blessed Sacrament is reserved on a side altar—as it often is—then the reverence of genuflection is paid, not to the altar but to the Sacrament. This reverence is of much later date than the reverence to the High Altar, or to a Bishop, as the highest representative of God known to the Church.

In Processions no notice is to be taken of any altar, even that of the Blessed Sacrament, once the Procession has started. At least that seems to be the most authoritative custom.

The other most usual reverence is that paid to the Holy Name of Jesus, which is honoured by a profound bow of the head; sometimes during services by a genuflexion, as Holy Scripture directs. A charming extension of this pious custom of bowing the head is made by the use of a lesser bow at the name of the Blessed Mother and the saint of the day, whenever these names occur in the service. Clergy wearing birettas, say during a sermon, entirely uncover at the name of Jesus, and lift their birettas at the mention of these lesser names.

A priest passing the High Altar on his way to celebrate at another altar bows to it but does not uncover, unless the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on it. If it is reserved on the High Altar, he genuflects without uncovering. The practical reason for this seems to be to avoid any accident to the sacred vessels.

A man should uncover, and a woman make a reverence, on passing a church in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

Another pious act of reverence is the uncovering of the head when passing a funeral, a custom which is happily becoming quite common again. This act of reverence towards the dead is usefully accompanied by a short prayer for the repose of the soul.

If a Procession of the Blessed Sacrament is passing, then the custom naturally is to uncover the head and to kneel at the moment when the Most Holy is opposite to one.

When a Bishop is passing down the church in Procession it is customary to kneel for the receipt of his blessing as he goes by.

II

THE CANDLES

FIRE is a great mystery. The ancients counted it among the four elements together with earth, air, and water. Prometheus, so the old Greek legend had it, was punished eternally for daring to steal the sacred fire from heaven and bringing it to earth. Fire warms and gives light. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost in the guise of fire to symbolize the light of truth, though the sun was giving its natural light so that men could see natural things. Our Lord calls himself the Light of the world. The Church of the Old Covenant had already seized the idea of the symbolism of the candle and the lamp, and both were used in the worship of the Temple in which our Lord took part. No wonder, then, that the Christian Church continued their use. When St. Paul said Mass at Troas, it is recorded that "there were many lights in the upper chamber." St. John, in his great vision, saw our Lord in glory "in the midst of the seven candlesticks." Constantine, the first Christian emperor, filled the churches he built with lamps and candelabra, and Pope Adrian (eighth century) gave to St. Peter's in Rome a candelabrum in the form of a cross which held no less than 1,365 candles, lighted at Christmas, Easter, St. Peter's Day, and the Pope's birthday. It must have made a brave show! There was also another meaning given to the candle: it was a mark of honour. In heathen times certain Roman

magistrates had the right to be preceded by candles, borne as a sign of rank. And so, later, the Pope was preceded by seven portable lights on Station Days. On his arrival at the central church where he was to sing the Mass, these lights were placed behind the altar. The next step was to place them on the altar itself, and to reduce them to six, for the sake of symmetry. Even so, when a bishop pontificates at Mass there are still the seven lights. The earliest altars bore none. The portable lights are thus the earliest form of altar lights, and the six are more ancient than the two. The two came in when Low Masses were instituted, a very early response to the devotion of the faithful in the West, though still unknown in the Eastern Church. The reduction of lights was by way of simplification. But they can bear the beautiful symbolism of setting forth the Two Natures of Christ, human and divine. A very early decree forbade the singing of Mass "without light," which is surely in full accord with the best Christian tradition.

There are two special candles in use at Eastertide—that is, at the time when our Lord is vindicated as the Light of the World. These are, the Paschal Candle, blessed with magnificent solemnity, and the triple candle from which it is lighted. In the Eastern Church, a bishop blesses the faithful with two candlesticks, one holding three candles, and the other two. The three stand for the Trinity, and the two for the Two Natures. Both are joined at the top in sign of unity.

III

THE ASHES

WE have, in the course of our revival, restored many of the old customs of the Church, so full of meaning, lost to us for awhile through the unimaginative simplifications of the Puritans. Thus we now meet quite commonly with the Crib at Christmas, the blaze of lights at Candlemas, the Procession of Palms on Palm Sunday, the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, the Paschal Candle at Eastertide. Less commonly the Procession with the Host takes its due place at Corpus Christi. Still less commonly do the Ashes find their traditional use on Ash Wednesday. It is difficult to account for this omission, for the ceremony is of very ancient date, especially in our own country. Thus the Anglo-Saxon Aelfric, writing in the tenth century, says of it: "We read in the books both of the Old Law and in the New that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast."

When Job was afflicted by permission of God, he strewed dust upon his head. Our Lord said of Tyre and Sidon that "they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes," had they had the chance that Chorazin and Bethsaida had had.

The ashes are made from the burning of the palms distributed on the last Palm Sunday, mingled with holy water. They are applied by the celebrant at the principal Mass of Ash Wednesday—which should be a Sung Mass—in the form of a cross on the foreheads of the faithful kneeling at the altar-rail, with the accompaniment of the words: “Remember, O man, that thou art dust, and to dust shalt thou return.” Thus Lent is given its true significance: it is not only a preparation for Easter Communion, it is—as Easter Communion also is—a part of the preparation for death, and, through death, for eternal life.

In early times the imposition of ashes was confined to public “penitents,” who were directed to come barefooted on Ash Wednesday to receive their penance, which consisted in their exclusion from the church until Maundy Thursday. The modern custom is for all, both clergy and lay folk, to take part in the observance.

The Ashes are the symbol of destruction of life through death. We are told that we must “die daily” that we may live. Lent is the special time for mortification; and mortification is simply, as its original meaning implies, the practice of the daily death. The Ashes help to implant this necessary truth in the soul. Therefore they are of great value, and no mere picturesque ceremony.

IV

H O L Y H A N D S

NEXT to the face the hand is the great revealer of the inner man, the best interpreter of his thoughts and feelings. Note, for instance, how expressively an orator uses his hands. Accordingly we are not surprised to find that the Holy Scriptures give a prominent place to the hand: it is mentioned in literally hundreds of passages, and it is given a position of great distinction. Thus God, through the lips of Isaiah, says of his people: "Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands," and our Lord is stated in the Creeds of the Church to be sitting at the right hand of God the Father, a position of the greatest honour and glory.

Our Lord tells the doubtful Thomas to prove the reality of his resurrection by the use of the hand in touch. St. John describes the value of his witness to Christ by describing him as one that "our hands have handled." There was not only the strong evidence of sight: there was also the even stronger evidence of touch.

The hand is used officially in Ordination, in Confirmation, in blessing, in the healing of body and soul. The root idea in its use is the transmission of power. The hands of the celebrant handle the Holy Gifts, the sacred Body, and the precious Blood. His hands deal reverently with the Missal, the censer, the cruets.

There is also, more generally, the use of the hands

in prayer. "I will, therefore," says St. Paul to St. Timothy, "that men should pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands." Their use in prayer is most expressive, and therefore the sacrificial use of the hands of the celebrant at Mass—as also in Office—is carefully regulated, to avoid eccentricity in so important a matter. There are few things so distracting as an undue prominence of the priest's hands. As a general rule they should not be visible to the congregation. The assistants also have a prescribed use of their hands, reverent but unobtrusive. In private devotion the clasping of the hands together is a natural aid to intensity; the lifting up of the hands in supplication imitates the sacrificial attitude of the priest at the altar; the smiting of the breast with the closed hand is a natural sign of penitence which also finds a place officially in the Mass; the folding of the hands upon the breast is a fitting evidence of submission to God's will, the sign given by the folded hands of the Christian in death. The worshipper must have not only a pure heart but "clean hands," which gives its significance to the Lavabo. We speak with real meaning, if under a figure, of coming out of an affair with clean hands. Our hands, then, have an immense significance. They are the most subtle part of the body: it is vitally necessary that they should be clean and holy.

V

THE HOLY KISS

‘**S**ALUTE one another with a holy kiss” is an Apostolic injunction. Kisses are an outward sign of reverence or of affection or of both. There is the ceremonious kissing of the hand of the Sovereign in token of homage, and there is the kiss which is the symbol of brotherly love, as in the instance of the Kiss of Peace at Mass, a very ancient custom indeed. Even so, the Kiss of Peace has in it the thought of homage, for it is given to those assisting at Mass in order of precedence—to the clergy first in their order of rank, and to the laity next, also in their order of rank. For example, a king attending Mass receives the Kiss of Peace before anyone else of the laity.

The celebrant kisses the altar at various times in the course of his ministrations in token of reverence. He kisses amice, maniple, and stole while vesting for the same reason. During Mass he will also kiss the paten, with the same intention, before he makes the commixture of the sacred Body and the precious Blood. The assistants kiss the hand of the bishop or priest when he is performing some sacred function, as also sacred objects such as the cruets, or the feet of the figure on the crucifix at the ceremony of the Veneration of the Cross, or, if they be men, the hand of the priest as he distributes the palms.

In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, a priest of the Eastern Orthodox Church is in constant attendance in the chapel built over the site of Calvary. He lowers a rod into the little pit, lined with silver, which has as its base the summit of the sacred hill, and holds it out for the faithful to kiss. In Bruges, the phial said to contain drops of the Precious Blood is held out for the faithful to kiss on certain days. The faithful greet a bishop, the chief representative of our Lord on earth, on ceremonial occasions by kissing the episcopal ring. Modern novels, and, more dreadfully, the films, impregnated with the deadly perfume of the flesh, are wont to degrade the kiss into a symbol of lust. The Church, our wise Mother, recalls us with marked insistence to the true meaning of the kiss. It is, in her eyes, rather the reverential symbol of the affection of a child for its parents, of the deep, pure feeling of members of a family for each other. And she sheds a light of fitting sacredness and benediction on the kiss of betrothal, prelude to a future family, if God wills. Not lust, but true love and consequent reverence is the basis of the kiss that is holy.

Three times is there special mention of a kiss in the record of the earthly life of our Lord. When Simon the Pharisee asked him to dine, he omitted the ceremonial kiss of greeting, as our Lord afterwards reminded him. Mary Magdalene repaired the omission by kissing his sacred feet, and by this act of love and humility began to be raised up from the lowest sin to the highest sanctity. We join her in repairing this omission when we kiss the crucifix or

other representation of the Saviour. Judas betrayed him with a kiss, the most terrible desecration of this symbol of love that has ever been perpetrated. There was need for the Church to restore its credit and to raise it again to honour.

VI

W A L K I N G

THE word "walk" is a favourite one in the Bible. It is to be found in more than three hundred passages, such as "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Our Lord describes himself as "the Way" as well as "the Truth" and "the Life": and "the Way" was the first description of our holy religion, before it was termed Christianity. "Pilgrim's Progress" was one of the most popular religious books ever penned, and its popularity has not waned.

A man's walk is one of his main distinguishing traits. One can tell a great deal about a man's character and disposition by the way he performs this very ordinary function of life; it is a self-revealing act. Much of our Lord's time during his mission on earth was taken up with walking, and there is no doubt that his disciples learned much about him from the way he walked. One particular walk of his is rather specially recorded, when he "set his face to go up to Jerusalem," where he knew he must meet his death, and his determined way of walking filled his disciples with fear.

The walk to and from church, specially to and from Holy Communion, can and should be a special act, guarded from interruption. Writers of pious books commend it as an obvious occasion for gaining recollectedness in silence. How often is the oppor-

tunity lost by talk ! The gait in church itself should express outwardly and unmistakably our sense of the holiness of the place we are in, as well as of the sanctity of the worship in which we are engaged. The choir walks in and out. So much depends on the way in which they do this. It can be a real help to the service, or a real hindrance. The same is to be said of the walk of the reader to the lectern: the cathedral "poker" is no mere meaningless adjunct. Most important of all, because most prominent, is the walk of the celebrant to and from the altar, and about it. A dignified, recollected, self-forgetting celebrant does much for the ceremonies by his walk. It has even been described, most aptly, if rather surprisingly, as "the solemn dance of the priest at Mass." Why not ? David "danced before the Lord," and the Church has even taken dancing under her broad wing. Thus there is the solemn dance of the choristers before the altar in Seville Cathedral which takes place in Passiontide. And there is the festal, processional dance at Echternach, in Luxembourg, which is performed annually on Whit Tuesday in honour of St. Willibrord, their first evangelist. "Whatsoever ye do," counsels St. Paul, "do all to the glory of God." He refers specially to the common actions of eating and drinking. But the equally common action of walking can also be included in his "whatsoever." If a performer in public, such as an actor, has to learn how to walk properly so as not to detract from his work by clumsiness, how much more is there to be said for the actors in the far more important drama of public worship learning to walk so as best to express what they are doing ?

VII

PROCESSIONS

WE dealt in the last chapter with the act of walking, ending with the solemn processional dance at Echternach. So now we can pass quite naturally to that formalized form of walking known as a Procession. It is a natural religious act. We find it in most pagan cults. In the Old Testament we have accounts of Processions with the Ark, and, in the New Testament, the record of our Lord's solemn entry into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. We have already seen how the altar lights came first into use as processional candles borne before the Pope as he proceeded to the church of the day's "Station." From the fact that Litanies were usually sung in these Processions, the whole ceremony came to be known as *Litania*. This special feature of Processions has survived in the Greater Litany sung in procession on St. Mark's Day, and in the Litany of the Saints similarly used at Rogation-tide, when the parish bounds are "beaten" and the fields blessed, as also in the procession from the font to the altar on Holy Saturday. Among us, too, the Prayer-Book Litany is often sung before Mass in procession, a very useful prelude.

Among the most picturesque Processions are those of the Candles at Candlemas and the Palms on Palm Sunday. The greatest Procession of the year is that of the Blessed Sacrament at Corpus Christi, smaller

editions of which are the little Processions to and from the Place of Repose, on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday respectively. The Corpus Christi Procession has some special features. Flowers are strewn in the path of the Procession, the Cross may be borne by a sub-deacon in a tunicle, and the other clergy present may vest in tunicles, dalmatics, and chasubles worn directly over rochet or surplice, and without stole or maniple; the same use that is observed when the Ordinary sings High Mass in his own cathedral.

The very striking ceremony of the Asperges also requires a small Procession, as does also the public preaching of the Way of the Cross. There is also a little Procession of priest, bridegroom, and bride from the chancel steps to the altar, even when no Nuptial Mass is to be celebrated. It is a useful reminder that there should be such a Mass.

Among us, festivals are commonly marked by Processions round the church from and to the altar before Mass and Evensong. They illustrate the triumphal march of the Church. They are a common feature of worship in France, and they serve to add dignity to a festival. There is nothing liturgically wrong about them, assuming, as of course we do assume, that they are carefully and recollectedly performed, that those taking part in them are seemingly spaced and not huddled together, and that they walk slowly and sedately. Hymns are commonly sung during such Processions. They should surely be in unison, to give a feeling of oneness among those taking part.

VIII

THE INCENSE

INCENSE has a pleasant perfume peculiarly its own. It is found as an adjunct of worship in most of the great religions of the world. Thus the ancient Temple of God at Jerusalem had its altar of incense, and the Hindu and the Buddhist has his joss-stick, made of incense. Prose-minded people have given the incense a purely "natural" significance. It was valued, they say, for its perfume as a set-off against less pleasant smells; it had, so to speak, the value of Sanitas or iodoform. But the Apocalypse has quite another and a far richer idea. "I saw," says St. John, "and an angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer. And there was given him much incense. . . . And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel." And, before that, the great promise of the birth of the Forerunner had come to his father Zacharias while he was offering the daily oblation of incense. These are rather elaborate settings for the Sanitas idea!

"Let my prayer be set forth as the incense: the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice"; that is what the priest is bidden to say as he incenses the altar at the Offertory—a rather richer idea than that of the "fumigatory use." The spirit of prayer is to impregnate the altar, the Gospel-book, the celebrant himself, the servers, the choir, the general body of

the faithful who are incensed. The mutual bows of the thurifer and those he is incensing convey an idea of the value of the gift he has to offer. The same spirit of prayer is to prevail at Evensong, and to pervade Processions, Benediction, the Blessing of Palms and New Fire, the funeral rites. "Pray without ceasing" is the Christian slogan enunciated by one of the greatest of the Apostles of Christ. And the incense emphasizes this slogan. There is a curious Protestant malady known as "incense headache." It is comparable to that other Protestant malady which goes by the name of "Sunday fever." This latter malady comes on acutely at about 10.30 a.m., but has quite vanished by dinner-time. "Incense headache" is apt to disappear on a second visit to a Catholic Church, some instruction on the connexion of incense with prayer having been received in the meantime.

The five senses are our avenue of experience. All of them are valuable, and all of them are dangerous and afford opportunities for temptation. The sense of touch is, on the whole, the strongest of the five, and the sense of smell is, in some aspects, very closely allied to the sense of touch, even if it be not really a part of it. The Church provides means to rule all the senses. And she rules the sense of smell through her use of incense.

IX

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

NO account of Catholic customs would be complete without a reference to the use of the Sign of the Cross. There can be little, if anything, fresh to say about it, but perhaps one may contrive to hit upon some point that the reader has not thought about. Everyone, for instance, knows that the Cross is *the* Christian sign, the banner of our Faith. "The royal banners forward go, the Cross shines forth with mystic glow"; with these words on our lips we usher in Passiontide. The Cross was given to us as a sign on our foreheads when we were made Christians at the font, as also, where the traditional ceremonies were employed, at our Confirmation, when the Bishop signed us with the chrism. The earliest Christians loved the sign of the Cross so much that they "blessed themselves" with it on meeting each other, as a sign of recognition, and also as a prelude to every important action, as a sign of its consecration to God. Early simplicities tend to become ceremonialized and stereotyped. The use of the sign of the Cross is now ordinarily confined to certain occasions such as at the end of a Creed, at the beginning and ending of prayer, before receiving Holy Communion, on saying Grace before *and after* meals. Bishops and priests use it in blessing, the latter with a single signing, the former with a triple signing in fully ceremonial blessings, with a single signing in

Procession or private blessings. The sign of the Cross is also used on taking Holy Water before and after entering a church.

The Eastern form for individual use is a triple signing, beginning at the forehead down to the breast, and then from the right shoulder to the left. The Western form is a single signing, beginning in the same way, but continuing from the left shoulder to the right. The triple form in the East brings in—as they love to do—the thought of the Holy Trinity. In both East and West the form symbolizes the consecration of the head, heart, and strength, reminding us that we love and worship God “with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength.” In the West there is a special triple signing at the announcement of the Holy Gospel, on forehead, lips, and breast, indicating a consecration of the lips as well as of the mind, the heart, and the strength.

The making of the sign of the Cross is a real ejaculatory prayer. It is of great value in repelling sudden temptation. “*In hoc signo vinces*”—“this is the sign of conquest.” It reminds us of the victory of the Cross over Satan, of the power of grace, of the banner under which we have been enrolled. So important is the sign of the Cross that even the Puritans were unable to drive it out utterly. It survived in Baptism among us, and its recovery on other occasions has been one of the chief marks of the Catholic revival. For which let us thank God!

X

H O L Y W A T E R

THE obvious symbolism of the use of water in religious ceremonies is cleansing and purification from the defilement of sin. It is one of the adjuncts of Natural Religion, and is to be found in all important ancient cults. The Psalmist expresses its central thought when he says that the worshipper in the House of the Lord must come with clean hands as well as with a pure heart—that is, that his purity must be outward as well as inward, including the whole man, body and soul.

Water is one of the ancient elements: it is also one of the great mysteries. In itself, it is clear and simple. St. Francis calls it “chaste.” One might say that it is self-less, only created to serve the needs of others, to purify, to refresh. Yet how terrible can water become in a raging sea or in a river in full spate! Our Lord told us that he would cause “rivers of waters” to spring up in us. They have the qualities we have noticed above: they may be quiet and calm, refreshing, invigorating; or they may well up in the terrible cleansing flood of sudden and violent conversion. We begin the Christian life with the Holy Water of Baptism. It takes away Original Sin. In its depths we are buried, as it were, and rise again new creatures. So the Church encourages us to frequent remembrance of our Baptism, not only with the use of the sign of the Cross, but also with

the use of Holy Water. On entering God's House we are to be cleansed again, as we were when we first entered it. So the Catholic reaches out his hand to the Holy Water stoup, and makes on himself the sign of the Cross anew, and thus in thought repeats his Baptism.

When the Holy Water is blessed by the priest, salt is included, a reminder of our Lord's saying: "Ye are the salt of the earth." The salt is also a purifier. The priest prays for a special blessing on the water, and on the salt, and on their union, after exorcising all evil from both salt and water. Thus a substance is obtained as pure as can be. The priest prays that the water may receive power to banish Evil Spirits, and to drive away diseases, "so that whatsoever in the houses or assemblies of the faithful be sprinkled with this wave may be utterly cleansed and freed from harm"; that "health obtained through the invocation of God's holy Name may be kept free from all assaults of evil."

It is with this idea in mind that the primitive and suggestive ceremony of the Asperges is carried out before the principal Mass of the day. It is surprising that this simple ceremony is so often omitted in quite "advanced" churches. By an extension of this idea, houses are blessed with Holy Water, and the faithful like to have a stoup by their prayer-desks. Its use in sickness is very ancient indeed, as the prayers for the blessing of Holy Water indicate. The custom of using it before private morning and evening prayers is helpful. It is not in the least "precious" or fanciful. For it recalls both the promises and the powers of our Baptism.

XI

THE CHRISTIAN'S DEATH-BED

THE approaching end of this booklet makes appropriate a special reference to death. That we shall die some day is one of the most certain facts that we know about ourselves. The whole Christian life is a "remote," that is, a "general," preparation for a Christian death. The special preparation is needed when it has become certain that death is near. In the remote preparation there will have been many a Confession made, many an act of Communion. Now has come the time when these things will have to be done for the last time. And there is a third Sacrament, the Sacrament of Unction, to help the Christian through "the valley of the shadow of death." This Sacrament has two sides: it helps the soul, if received with proper dispositions, as all Sacraments do; it also *may*, if God so wills, help the body towards recovery of health. These two sides are quite plainly shown by St. James, in his Epistle (ch. v.). The Sacrament is commonly called Extreme Unction, either because it is received when we are *in extremis*, or because, normally, it is the last anointing we shall receive, the others being at Baptism and Confirmation. The faithful Catholic will summon his priest as well as his doctor when he is *in extremis*. His friends and relatives will not conceal from him, through a woefully mistaken kindness, the serious condition he is in; they will realize

how vitally important it is for him to proceed to the immediate preparation for his death. Awaiting the priest's arrival with the Holy Oil and the Blessed Sacrament, a table will have been prepared, covered with a clean white cloth, near the bed, at the side or at the foot, with a crucifix, two lights, a bowl of water and a towel for the priest to wash his hands, some small pieces of cotton-wool, a piece of ordinary bread—these two last being for use in the administration of Unction, the bread being for the priest to get the oil thoroughly off his hands, before proceeding to give Holy Communion. The priest will be met at the door of the house with a lighted candle, and genuflection made to the Blessed Sacrament he is carrying. He will be led to the sick-room *in complete silence*. If the dying man has not previously made his last Confession, everyone will withdraw out of hearing; in the case of a woman, the door of the room will not be shut, but the friends will withdraw out of hearing.

As death draws very near, a crucifix will be placed where the patient can see it most easily, and the beautiful Prayers for the Dying will be recited, not necessarily by a priest. The patient will be surrounded with an atmosphere of calm and of hope. All selfish emotions will be suppressed, and the spiritual good of the patient be the sole consideration. After death, the eyes of the patient will be reverently closed, and the hands folded upon the breast, with a crucifix between them. It is natural to light candles and to use flowers. If possible an all-night Watch will be kept in the church, in the presence of the body, before the funeral, and a Mass of Requiem said or sung on the morning of the day of burial.

XII

THE BELLS

IN many places the Old Year is rung out and the New Year rung in on the church bells. So it may be of interest if we wind up this series of "Catholic Customs" with some account of one of the most universal of them, the ringing of bells. The use of bells in connexion with religion is one of the many uses that the Catholic Religion has in common with Natural Religion. Bells are to be found used in most early religious cults. The ancient Babylonians used them, as also did the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. The Jewish High-priest had bells attached to his ephod. They were, of course, quite small. It is doubtful whether anything larger than a hand-bell was used before Christian times. The first Christian writer to mention bells is St. Gregory of Tours (6th century). They appear to have been struck or shaken, as they are still in Italy to-day, not pulled with a rope. An early word for a bell is "clocca," from which we get our word "clock." It is Irish in origin (in the form of "clog") and is to be found in the Book of Armagh (6th century). There are more than sixty of these original bells still in existence—for instance, St. Patrick's Bell, still preserved in Dublin. By the eighth century bells had come to be regarded as an essential part of the equipment of churches. Their shape gradually evolved from that of a cowbell to

their present form. The blessing of church bells is a very ancient ceremony, quaintly like that of Baptism. The primary use of the bells was to call the faithful to church. The grade of the feast was distinguished by the number of bells used. The "Passing Bell" is also to be found very early. The hand-bell still survived, alongside its bigger brother, and in many parts of France in older days confraternities of hand-bell ringers attended funerals and summoned the faithful to Requiems. Special bells are the "De Profundis," rung in Rome an hour before the Angelus; the Angelus (or Ave Maria), possibly developed from the Curfew; and the Sanctus Bell, which dates from the introduction of the Elevation of the Host in the thirteenth century. In England it seems to have been more usual to ring a small bell—even a hand-bell—than one of the large church bells, and there still exist mediæval bell-cotes above the chancel for the Sanctus Bell. Some church bells are of enormous size, the largest in England being that at St. Paul's Cathedral, which weighs $17\frac{1}{2}$ tons. Originally starting with the three bells which Pope Stephen gave to St. Peter's in the eighth century, peals of four, five, six, eight, ten, or twelve bells have developed, with a literature of their own. Later still, the beautiful carillon, so familiar in Belgium, was installed, and is now to be heard in several places in this country. It is played from a key-board, with pedals. The one at Ghent has 52 bells, that at Loughborough 47, at Bourneville and Aberdeen 37, at Queenstown Cathedral 42. So the faithful may now be summoned to worship by some of the most spiritual and ethereal music ever composed.